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WHERE SHEETS WEAR OUT.

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A radio talk by Ruth O'Brien, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through WRC and 39 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, January 8, 1931.

We're hearing a great many slogans these days. "Buy now" is one that is appearing on our bill boards here in Washington. I am sure all of us agree it is a good one -- for those who have the money to pay for what they buy. I saw one the other day that changed it a bit. It read "Buy wisely now." I like that and I would add "Take care of what you have and what you buy." Perhaps that's not snappy enough for a slogan, but let's apply the idea to sheets, anyway.

Right now is a good time to buy those very necessary articles. Prices are lower and in many places stores are having their white sales during January and February. But -- buy them wisely, and take care of those you have as well as those you buy.

The Bureau of Home Economics picked up some very practical hints awhile back in regard to buying and caring for sheets. It happened that 400 were available which had been worn out at a Washington hotel. They were all of one brand, bought in 1921 and discarded over a period of 11 months during '27 and '28. They offered a fine opportunity to find out just how and where sheets wear out. So, in connection with a study of cotton utilization the Bureau made a little survey of what had happened to these 400 sheets. Each one was examined carefully and the position and type of every worn place written down.

It was very evident that most of the wear came where the shoulders of the weary sleepers had lain. Some people had told us that it is restless feet that wear out sheets but apparently it is restless shoulders. Then most of the tears were right down the center fold. Most of the threadbare places showed that those yarns which ran cross-wise of the sheet had given away while those that ran lengthwise were still intact. And many were the worn and frayed selvages.

But what could have been done about it? Well, certainly, sheets with well-made selvages could have been bought. And certainly those jagged wires on the bed springs and other sharp points that catch and tear the edges of all bedding could have been eliminated.

Then, the wear on the upper part would not have been so great if the sheets had had hems of equal width top and bottom so that they would not always have been placed on the bed exactly the same way. Those with stronger filling yarns could have been purchased. Often the crosswise or so-called filling yarns of fabrics are smaller or much more loosely twisted and therefore weaker than the lengthwise or warp yarns. By making them different, various interesting effects are produced which increase the charm of the material. But of course most of us are looking for other qualities besides charm and interesting effects

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in the bed sheets we buy. Where durability is the chief quality wanted a well-balanced cloth in which the weave is a plain over-and-under one and the yarns are about the same in size and twist, will be a more economical buy. It is well to get in the habit of thinking of a piece of cloth as being made up of yarns which are themselves made of small fibers twisted together. When buying, look at the yarns closely and see if they are well twisted and, in fabrics like sheets, see if both the filling and warp yarns are about the same in strength.

The breakage down the center could have been lessened by buying sheets with reinforcing yarns there. Or where this had not been done, by seeing that the center fold was not pressed in when the sheets were laundered. By the way, do you place your household textiles in the closet or dresser so that all the pieces take their turn at coming out and being used? I sometimes find a lazy one that has been at the bottom of the pile for months and hasn't worked at all. The folds on these are usually pressed in very hard and no doubt the yarns will break along those folds more quickly than any place else.

A little wiser buying and a little more care, would have added to the life of those hotel sheets that were examined. And I assure you, it will make those you buy tomorrow last a lot longer, too.
